



CONGRESSMAN HENRY A. WAXMAN NEWS

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CAPITOL SPOTLIGHT
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SOVIET TREATMENT OF U.S. MAIL

If you or anyone you know corresponds with people in the Soviet Union (or one of the Eastern bloc countries) it is urgent that you read this column to the end.

Evidence is mounting that the Soviet Union is guilty of wholesale violations of the international postal agreements to which they subscribe.

Reciprocal treatment of postal materials is the most basic cooperation which occurs between civilized societies. Even countries with a long history of hostility toward each other and intense tensions at the current time deliver each others' mail.

Of course, the reciprocal delivery of mail does not necessarily indicate mutual affection or even respect. After all, both sides benefit from the free and prompt exchange of letters and parcels.

The Committee on Post Office and Civil Service of Congress is conducting a nation-wide survey to determine the extent to which the Soviet Union and other countries are failing to honor their postal obligations. I hope readers of this column will help.

During my recent trip to the Soviet Union, I took out a number of letters and manuscripts intended for Soviet refugees now living in the United States. My Soviet hosts told me they had good reason to mistrust the Soviet mail.

Most of the material I received, I mailed upon returning to the United States. One of the designated recipients lives just a short distance from my Los Angeles office. I invited him to stop by, visit with me, and collect the items I brought for him. He was thrilled to receive materials from one of his closest friends left behind in the Soviet Union. The friend was seriously ill, and the man in Los Angeles was relieved to receive reasonably good news about his health.

I asked the Los Angeles man if he and his Moscow friend corresponded frequently. He told me he received letters from the U.S.S.R. from time to time. However, he is certain from their content that his own letters were never received. He feels discouraged about writing to the Soviet Union and is certainly wary of sending packages.

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Those of us who complain when the letter carrier is a little late may have a hard time understanding how horrible it is to be unable to keep in touch with close relatives and lifetime friends. Refuseniks in the Soviet Union are terribly isolated. Many have no phone. Radio news from outside the U.S.S.R. is systematically jammed. Religious people in the Soviet Union--Christian and Muslim, as well as Jewish--rely heavily on the mails for information and a sense of solidarity with their co-religionists.

If you send mail to the Soviet Union, please answer the following questions. Return your answers to Rep. Henry A. Waxman, 8425 West Third Street, Suite 400, Los Angeles, CA 90048.

1. Do you usually send your letters registered, return receipt requested?
2. Would you use the registered-return receipt method more often if it were less expensive?
3. Can you supply Congress with any evidence of interference by the Soviet government with mail sent from the United States? (If so, please describe briefly.)

Free and open communications are prerequisites for understanding and cooperation.

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